

Foothill Leader

Weekend, June 16-17, 2001

# Soil cleanup being proposed at JPL

■ Public comment sought as NASA presents plan to clean contaminated soils. Water table threatened.

**Marshall Allen**  
THE LEADER

LA CAÑADA FLINT-RIDGE — Toxic waste has contaminated soil and water under Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and officials there are seeking public comment on a proposal to clean it up.

According to an April document from NASA proposing the cleanup, the contaminated soil is not a health risk for people in the area, or to the

## QUESTION WEIRD WATER?



How can JPL best solve its contaminated soil and water problem? Is a health risk being posed? E-mail your responses to [gnp@latimes.com](mailto:gnp@latimes.com) or mail them to Community Forum, 111 W. Wilson Ave. #200, Glendale 91203.

environment. The document explains that the contaminants, known as volatile organic compounds are chemical compounds that contain carbon and readily

evaporate into the air at room temperature.

In the 1940s and '50s, JPL cleaned rocket motors with chlorinated solvents, said Richard Zuromski, an environmental engineer at JPL. The used solvents went into seepage pits, which drained the chemicals into the soil.

"It was standard practice then, but it's no longer done," Zuromski said.

The VOCs range in depth, starting at about 50 feet below the surface and going down to the water table, at about 200 feet.

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*"The reason we're doing the cleanup is because the chemicals are migrating down to the water table," Zuromski said. "It [the cleanup] prevents them from reaching the drinking-water supply."*

*Zuromski said that some water has already been contaminated, but that it was treated before going to water customers. "They treat it [the water] in order to keep people from becoming sick," Zuromski said. "There could be risks if people drink it and it's not treated."*

*The Regional Water Quality Control Board confirmed that water in the city of Pasadena and Lincoln water wells has been contaminated by seepage from the JPL site.*

*ski said. "It's been very successful. It's already cleaned up a large portion of the area," he said. The cleanup will take two to five years and will be monitored by the EPA and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. It will cost an estimated \$3.7 million, which will be paid by NASA.*

## IF YOU GO

- **WHAT:** Public comment on JPL cleanup plan.
- **WHEN:** 6 p.m. Wednesday.
- **WHERE:** Eliot Middle School auditorium, 2184 N. Lake Ave., Altadena.

Pasadena's Arroyo well had to be closed because of contamination, while other water was treated to be safe for drinking. The Regional Water Quality Control Board confirmed that treated water is safe to drink.

According to the NASA document, the cleanup would use a method called Soil Vapor Extraction, a two-step process that removes VOCs from soil vapors with a vacu-

um applied to an underground well. The VOC vapors then are treated to prevent their release into the atmosphere, according to NASA.

Soil Vapor Extraction is an EPA-recommended process that already has been tested in a JPL pilot study, Zurom-

ski said. "It's been very successful. It's already cleaned up a large portion of the area," he said.

The cleanup will take two to five years and will be monitored by the EPA and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. It will cost an estimated \$3.7 million, which will be paid by NASA.